DOCTOR STRANGE

MARVEL

#21

HOPELESS
HENRICHON

STEPHEN STRANGE was a preeminent surgeon until a car accident damaged the nerves in his hands. His ego drove him to scour the globe for a miracle cure, but instead he found a mysterious wizard called the ANCIENT ONE who taught him magic and that there are things in this world bigger than himself. These lessons led Stephen to become the Sorcerer Supreme, Earth's first defense against all manner of magical threats. His patients call him...

DOCTOR STRANGE

A Cosmic Cube transformed Steve Rogers, Captain America, into the ultimate Hydra sleeper agent--and after months of scheming and manipulation, the country is now under Hydra's control. Doctor Strange and some of Earth's street-level heroes are trapped inside the Darkforce bubble that envelops New York City.

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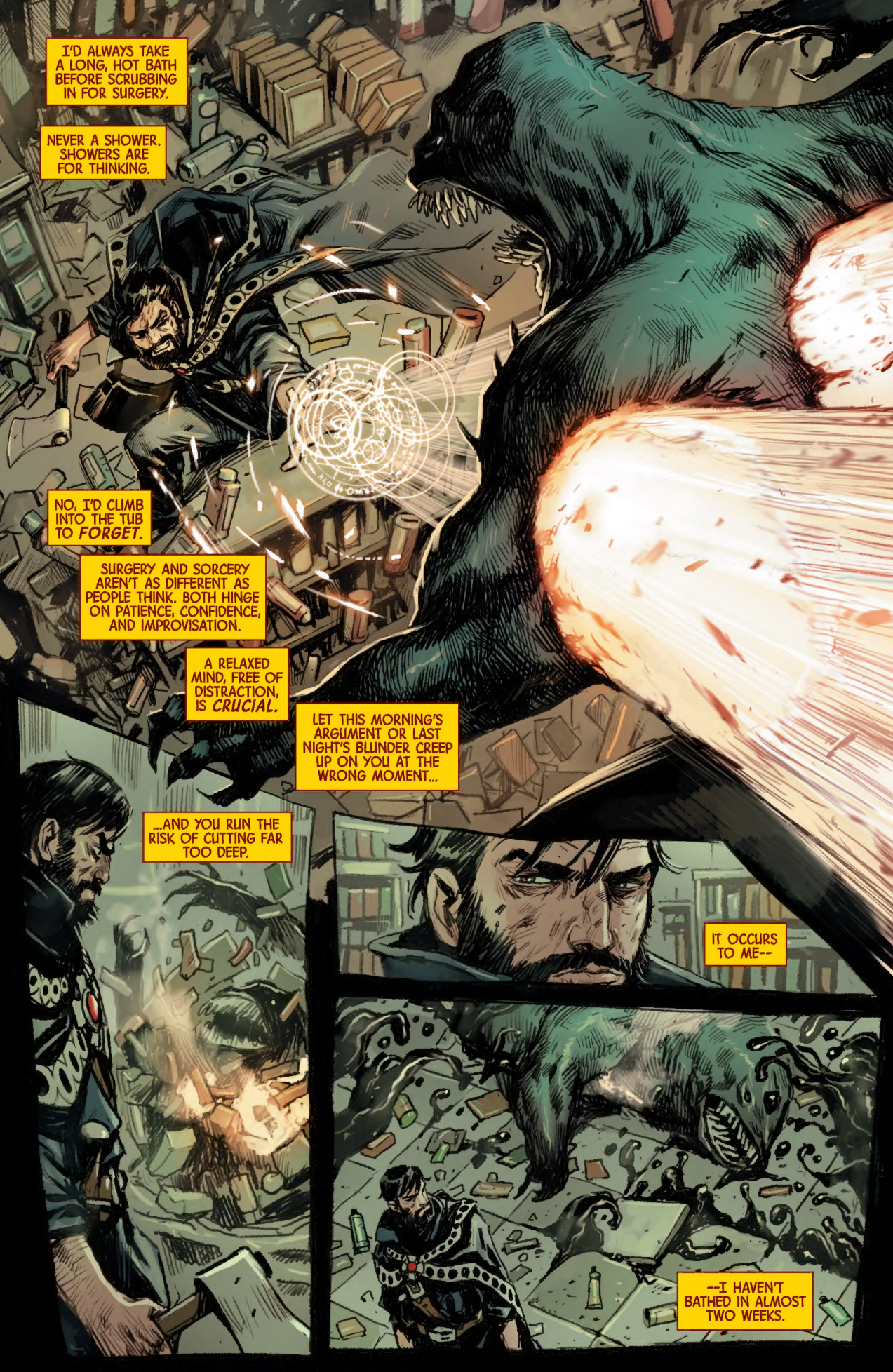

I'D ALWAYS TAKE A LONG, HOT BATH BEFORE SCRUBBING IN FOR SURGERY.
NEVER A SHOWER. SHOWERS ARE FOR THINKING.
NO, I'D CLIMB INTO THE TUB TO *FORGET.*
SURGERY AND SORCERY AREN'T AS DIFFERENT AS PEOPLE THINK. BOTH HINGE ON PATIENCE, CONFIDENCE, AND IMPROVISATION.
A RELAXED MIND, FREE OF DISTRACTION, IS *CRUCIAL.*
LET THIS MORNING'S ARGUMENT OR LAST NIGHT'S BLUNDER CREEP UP ON YOU AT THE WRONG MOMENT...
...AND YOU RUN THE RISK OF CUTTING FAR TOO DEEP.
IT OCCURS TO ME--
--I HAVEN'T BATHED IN ALMOST TWO WEEKS.

MY NERVES AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS THAT HAVE FRAYED.
MAGIC ISN'T WHAT IT ONCE WAS.
NO MORE EYE OF AGAMOTTO.
NO CLOAK OF LEVITATION.
prescription
AND CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT IF I WAGGLE MY FINGERS AT THIS SWELL OF SENTIENT STOMACH ACID...
...HE'LL BURN THEM CLEAN OFF.
EEEEEK!
TH WOOK
PRACTICAL MAGIC IS THE NAME OF THE GAME THESE DAYS.
I'M FORCED TO RELY ON WHAT'S AT HAND.
TOOLS. TRINKETS. WEAPONS.
SLUMMING IT, IF YOU WILL.
ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST.

SO WHY WOULD AN OTHERWISE SAVVY SORCERER SUPREME SUBJECT HIMSELF TO SUCH HELLISH ENVIRONS AS THESE--

--ARMED WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A DEMIGOD'S OLD HATCHET--

--AND AN ENCHANTED SWAN FEATHER?

BECAUSE I HAVE LITTLE OTHER CHOICE.

THE ISLAND OF MANHATTAN HAS BEEN ENCASED IN THE *DARKFORCE DIMENSION.*

BEASTIES OF EVERY SORT RUN RAMPANT IN A CITY NOW ALL BUT DEVOID OF LIGHT.

SUPPLIES ARE SCARCE, AND MY WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY...

...IS CLOSING.

50%

SALE!!!

personal health

NNNNNG...

SQUIRT

FLMMP

BY THE HOARY HOST...

AND HERE I THOUGHT THE OTHER END WAS FOUL.

NO OFFENSE, UH, TONGUE.

UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN FRIENDS.

YES. YES. THRASH ABOUT ALL YOU LIKE.

THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO THAT SWEET RELIEF.

...SOMETHING *FIERCE.*

SO LET ME APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE.

THIS IS GOING TO ITCH...

BUT I FEAR TODAY WE'RE AT CROSS-PURPOSES.

OPEN WIDE.

YOU'VE QUITE CLEARLY BITTEN OFF...

...MORE THAN YOU CAN...

WHAK

...CHEW!!

DAMN.
KA-KRUNK
Pharma-
→SIGH←
WELL...MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
GLUGGLUGGLUG
BLEGH!
ELECTROLYTES BE DAMNED, VILE SUGAR WATER.

ACROSS TOWN.
I WOULD NEVER PRESUME TO QUESTION YOUR SUPER-HEROIC MOTIVATIONS, DAREDEVIL...
...I'D JUST LIKE TO HEAR A MORE CONCRETE EXPLANATION OF THE PLAN HERE.
IT'S A PRETTY SIMPLE ONE, BEN.
THERE'S A BIG BAD BUNCH OF MAGIC LOOSE.
DOCTOR STRANGE IS M.I.A. AND NOW, ALL OF THE SUDDEN, HIS HOUSE IS INSIDE A BIG MARBLE HALFWAY UP THE CHRYSLER BUILDING.
WE'RE CLIMBING UP THERE TO POKE AROUND.
PRECISELY.
AND YOU BROUGHT ME ALONG...WHY, EXACTLY?
STRANGE HAS A WHOLE LIBRARY FULL OF SCARY MAGIC BOOKS UP HERE AND YOU HAVE A MASTER'S DEGREE IN LITERATURE.
MUCH TO MY MOTHER'S CHAGRIN...BUT, JESS, I'M NOT SURE THAT QUALIFIES ME TO--
TOO BAD, URICH! WORLD'S GONE TO HELL.
IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK.
WAAAK
CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
OKAY, I'M UP.
THE SPHERE IS SOME KIND OF FORCE FIELD, BUT YOU CAN PUSH RIGHT THROUGH.

IT'S THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM, ALL RIGHT...AND MOST OF THE SURROUNDING BLOCK.
MYSTICALLY IMPENETRABLE AS USU--
ACTUALLY. NO.
THERE IS A WEAK SPOT.
I'M GOING IN!
KRASH

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT SWORDS AND SORCERY--
--BUT THE SANCTUM IS TRAPPED IN A MAGIC SPHERE.
THE CITY IS TRAPPED IN A DARKFORCE DOME.
MY RADAR SHOWS ME SOME SORT OF GLOWING BALL OF MYSTICAL ENERGY...
...AND I'VE HAD THIS ETERNAL BLADE IN A SAFE DEPOSIT BOX FOR YEARS AND YEARS.
I'M NOT SAYING KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID...
...BUT LET'S PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER HERE...
...AND SEE IF WE DON'T GET...
KEEEEE

WAAAGGGH!
HELLO THERE, DAREDEVIL, IS IT?
I'M BARON MORDO.
ALREADY A SORCERER OF SOME RENOWN IN DARK WIZARDING CIRCLES, AND NOW--
--THANKS TO ZEMO AND YOUR CAPTAIN AMERICA--
--ALL-POWERFUL CARETAKER OF THIS DARKFORCE MANHATTAN.
WELCOME TO MY PRISON BALL. I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU FELL FOR IT.
SIT TIGHT. WE'LL CHAT MORE IN A BIT.
I HAVE JUST THE TINIEST BIT OF WORK TO DO.
PLUORRG!
PLEASE REGISTER OUR OTHER GUESTS...
...IN YOUR DIGESTIVE TRACT!
CAN I SAFELY ASSUME THERE ISN'T MUCH OF A PLAN B HERE?
MMMHMM.

IT'S TRUE THAT MORDO HAS TAKEN THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM, AND ALONG WITH IT MOST OF THE TRULY POWERFUL TOTEMS, GRIMOIRES AND POTIONS ON THE ISLAND.
MY DISADVANTAGE IS OBVIOUS.
BUT THE BARON AND I AREN'T FIGHTING A WIZARD'S DUEL.
THERE'S NO NEED TO MATCH HIM SPELL FOR SPELL.
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS FREE THE CITY FROM THIS ACCURSED DOME.
THERE IS MAGIC IN ALL THINGS. POWER CAN BE COLLECTED, IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO LOOK.
THE MEAL A YOUNG COUPLE SHARED ON THE FIRST NIGHT IN THEIR NEW HOME.
LUCKY RABBIT'S FOOT DANGLED FROM THE IGNITION IN THREE SEPARATE FATAL CAR ACCIDENTS.
THE PRIZED POSSESSION OF A THREE-YEAR-OLD BOY.
ADD TO THAT THE GODS' PRECIOUS GIFT OF FIRE...
BLOOP
...AND YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF A *FINE* WITCHES' BREW.

DARK STAR OF LIMBO...HEAR MY PLEA.
MAY YOU DRAW YOUR FIRE FROM OUR HUMANITY.
FROM LIFE AND LOVE AND DEATH...BRING FORTH THAT FLAME.
NOW...
BY THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE!
PEEL BACK THE DARK VEIL THAT ENCASES US!
SCORCH AWAY THIS WRETCHED CAGE!

WHAT IS THAT?!
HOW THE HELL SHOULD I KNOW?!
ALL OF THIS MAGIC CRAP IS NONSENSE TO ME!
WELL...FLY OUT OF THE WAY!
FOR THE LAST TIME, I DON'T FRIGGIN' FLY!
I GLIDE! I GLIDE!
KAUH-O-O-O

FLMMP
FLMMP
MYSTIC MOONS...WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
NO, NO, NO!
WHAT? WHAT? WHAT?
TWO WEEKS... I'VE SPENT HUNTING AND GATHERING INGREDIENTS FOR THAT GODSFORSAKEN WITCHES' BREW.
OH...SO THAT WAS SOME KIND OF SPELL?
WHAT WAS IT MEANT TO DO?
BURN AWAY THE DOME AND FREE THE CITY FROM THE DARKFORCE DIMENSION.

VRRRM
WHAT'D IT DO INSTEAD?
IT APPEARS TO HAVE CHARRED THE TOP SEVERAL LAYERS OF SKIN OFF OF THAT UNFORTUNATE CREATURE.
OUCH.
WELP, YOUR PLAN FAILED, DOC.
WHAT'S NEXT?
MY PLAN DID *NOT* FAIL!
NO? SURE *LOOKS* LIKE IT FAILED.
I MEAN, THE SKY'S GONE BLACK, THAT DOME'S STILL UP, AND THERE'S ALL SORTS OF HORRIBLE MONSTERS RUNNING AMOK.
SKRREEEE
GAH!
YOU PEOPLE DROPPED AN ELDER GOD IN THE PATH OF THE *FALTINE'S FLAME!*
YEAH, TWENTY-SIDED WORDS DON'T CHANGE THE FACTS, DUNGEON MASTER. *THIS* PLAN FAILED. WHAT'S THE *NEXT* PLAN?

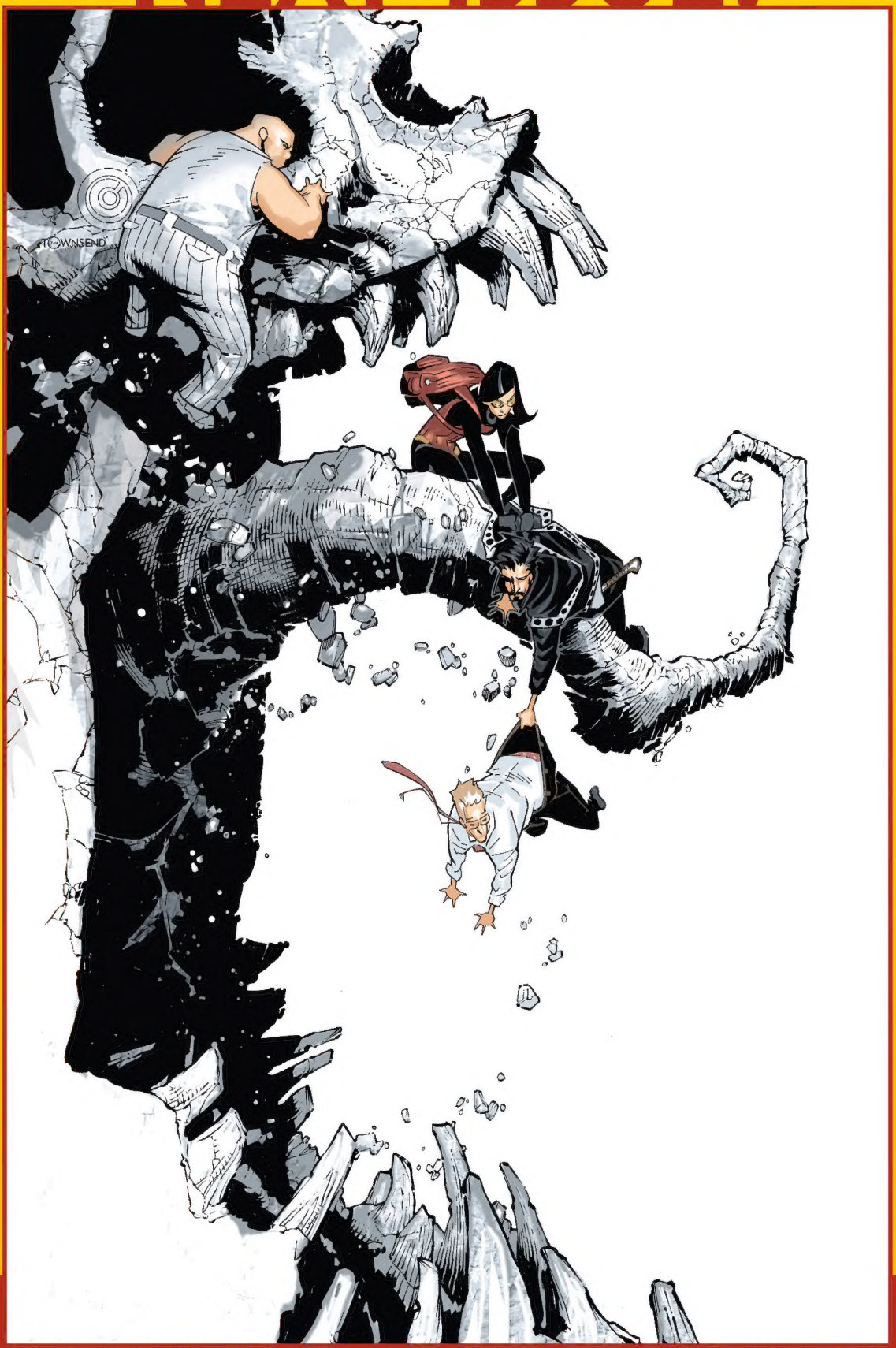
EEEE
SKREEE
MY APOLOGIES, SPIDER-WOMAN! I FAILED TO PREPARE A CONTINGENCY FOR YOUR PARTICULAR BRAND OF INEPTITUDE.
APOLOGY ACCEPTED.
WILL YOU TWO PLEASE STOP ARGUING?!
GET OVER HERE AND STOP THIS THING FROM EATING ME!
OOOPS... SORRY, BENNY!
KRAKOOSH!!

SQUOOOSH
I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU *DIDN'T* HAVE A CONTINGENCY PLAN.
I DON'T.
WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU WERE WRONG REGARDLESS!
THAT'S A RELIEF.
I DON'T MUCH LIKE ADMITTING WHEN I'M WRONG.
WAS I THOUGH?

WELL, THAT WAS DISGUSTING.
QUITE.
YOU WANNA KEEP AT IT, OR SHALL WE THANK OUR SAVIOR FOR THEIR RECKLESS DRIVING?
EITHER WAY.
I HATE THE BOTH OF YOU.

WOW. THAT'S ONE STURDY LIMO.
YEAH... BULLETPROOF, I'D WAGER.
HELLO UP THERE!
IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?!
RIGHT AS RAIN, MAGIC MAN.
THE SORCERER SUPREME NOW OWES ME A FAVOR...
...AND WILSON FISK ALWAYS COLLECTS HIS DEBTS.
TO BE CONTINUED...

NEXT ISSUE:



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